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D R A G O N - F L I E S .

By E. STENHOUSE, A.R.C.S.

To-day I saw the dragon-fly
Come from the wells where he did lie.
An inner impulse rent the veil
Of his old husk ; from head to tail
Came out clear plates of sapphire mail.
He dried his wings : like gauze they grew ;
Thro' crofts and pastures wet with dew
A living flash of light he flew.

SENNYSON was not only a great poet, but a close and accurate observer of Nature ; and naturalists may well feel grateful that he occasionally used his marvellous gift to describe in verse the phenomena which they — equally susceptible to the beauty of Nature's wonders, but tongue-tied — watch with such loving enthusiasm.

There could scarcely be a greater contrast than that which exists between the perfect dragon-fly, with its brilliant colours and active flight, and the grovelling little monster from which it is derived, living its sordid life in the slime of a malodorous ditch. It would be difficult to find a creature which for sheer hideousness could match the early stage or larva of a dragon-fly. Its colour is a dingy gray, a hue which resembles so much that of the muddy bottom of the ditch that the beast is almost invisible until it begins to move. This protective colouration is, of course, of immense service, as it screens the animal from the observation of enemies and victims alike.

The body of the larva is divided into three parts — head, thorax, and abdomen. The head carries the 'feelers,' a pair of prominent eyes, and a most formidable system of jaws. On the thorax are fixed the six long, sprawling legs. The abdomen is distinctly subdivided into rings like those of the hinder part of a lobster's body.

The larva of one family of dragon-flies has three delicate plates attached to the end of its tail. These plates are gills, and are the organs by which the animal breathes. The whole body is clad in a sort of horny shell, which is a veritable suit of armour.

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The larva is incapable of active movement, but a tireless vigilance enables it to stalk successfully the most nimble prey. The head of one species is quite suggestive of that of a cat, and there is something truly feline in the manner in which it lies *perdu* beneath the shade of a water-weed, or half-buried in the mud which it so closely resembles, stealthily awaiting the approach of its victim.

As the unsuspecting tadpole swims lazily within striking distance, like lightning out shoots a pair of murderous pincers, and the wriggling but helpless prey is conveyed to the mouth, to be leisurely devoured. This terrible paw, with its terminal pincers, is a very characteristic feature of the dragon-fly larva. The end of the weapon is carried, when not in use, in front of the face, and completely hides the jaws which are used for chewing. It is known as the mask, and is borne upon a jointed arm, which is fixed under the animal's chin.

When the structure is closed, the hinge of the arm points backward between the legs, and the creature looks the type of stolid virtue. The larva is, however, perhaps the fiercest inhabitant of the ditch, and woe betide the succulent adventurer who is seized in the ruthless grip of the toothed-jaws when the mask is thrown off.

Let us now turn to the breathing apparatus of this tyrant of the waters. Like every other living thing, a dragon-fly larva can only carry on its life-activities when it can obtain a due supply of oxygen. Every movement of the body, legs, or mask uses up a certain quantity of oxygen and produces a poisonous gas called carbon dioxide. The oxygen must be renewed and the carbon dioxide must be got rid of, or the larva will sicken and die. The manner in which this is carried out is perhaps the most interesting feature of the animal's life-history.

I have already mentioned that the larva of one family of dragon-flies (the family rejoices in the impressive appellation of *Agrionidae*) carries at

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the end of its tail three delicate leaf-like plates, the tracheal gills. When the gills are examined by means of the microscope they are seen to be made up almost wholly of a fine meshwork of tiny air-tubes. So delicate are the gills that the air in these little tubes is only separated from the water of the pond or ditch by a membrane of excessive thinness.

The water of the pond always contains air dissolved in it, and an interchange is constantly taking place between the vitiated gas contained in the delicate air-tubes of the filmy gills and the life-giving dissolved air of the water. Now, the little air-tubes of the gills are in communication with a very perfect system of pipes which ramify throughout the whole of the larva's body; and thus it comes about that every organ, however remote from the tail, is constantly being supplied with fresh oxygen.

It is only the aristocratic Agrionidae, however, that possess these tracheal gills. The other families must perform obtain their oxygen in some other manner. If one of these commoner larvæ be touched, it will be seen to move away from the annoyance with a sudden dart forward, although no propelling force can be distinguished. As a matter of fact the impulse comes from the sudden ejection of water from the end of the intestine. This terminal portion of the digestive tube is thrown into a number of folds, which increase its surface enormously. As the folds contain in their walls a multitude of fine air-tubes, gaseous interchange can as readily take place here as in the leaf-like external gills of the Agrionidae. All that is necessary is that the water shall be constantly changed, and this is effected by a complicated system of muscles. The abdomen can be seen to rhythmically dilate and contract. When it dilates, the cavity of the intestine increases, and water flows in. Then the muscles contract, and the diminution of the space causes the expulsion of the water. Thus the change of the water bathing the air-tubes, which the Agrionidae effect by wagging their tails, is brought about in other families by the action of the wall of the intestine as suction-pump and force-pump alternately. The alternate sucking in and driving out of the water are as truly inspiration and expiration respectively as the similar processes by which a man renews the air of his lungs. The air-tubes which permeate the intestinal folds are connected with the general system of air-tubes of the body in the same way as are those of the Agrionid gill-plates.

In this manner does the young dragon-fly larva spend his days. In the meantime he is growing larger and larger, and therefore finds it necessary to periodically cast off his old suit of armour, and grow another one more in accordance with his ampler dimensions. Tiny wing-rudiments begin to make their appearance on his back, and a growing restlessness and irritability indicate the

impending crisis of his life. He no longer breathes dissolved air only, but frequently rises to the surface, and takes in the stimulating oxygen direct from the atmosphere by means of a series of tiny mouths which have opened along the sides of his body. Whilst he is actually submerged these openings are, of course, of no use, and the larva relies upon his gills, caudal or rectal according to his social position.

At length the critical hour approaches, and the larva leaves the water for ever. He betakes himself to the shore, and clasping a friendly stem or branch, awaits his transformation. When he is firmly fixed, the larval skin splits down the back of the thorax, and the split extends forward until the head and thorax can be completely withdrawn from their sheaths. Then the animal bends back his body and draws his six legs out of their cases. The unprotected limbs are at first quite soft, and far too flexible to be of much use. The animal therefore rests from his labours until the legs are somewhat hardened. When the joints are strong enough for the final effort—and this strengthening process may last for nearly half-an-hour—the beast firmly fixes his feet upon the thoracic part of the larval skin, and, with a final mighty pull, completely withdraws his abdomen.

The famous Réaumur has given such an interesting description of what follows that I should like to quote it here :

'Though the dragon-fly was now free, it had a very different appearance from those which range the fields. It seemed deformed; the abdomen, though longer than the sheath from which it had issued, had not yet acquired its full length. The wings seemed little larger than when they were enclosed in their sheaths. They were turned edgewise, laid side by side, and folded up like a fan or like a leaf in the bud. Not only were they folded along their length, but also transversely. The wings expanded so rapidly that it was difficult to get a faithful drawing made of them. At this time the fly carefully avoided spreading his wings, for though they afterwards become firm as sheets of tace, they are at present soft as wet paper. It is important to avoid the slightest derangement, or even contact with one another. The abdomen is carefully bent into such a position as to avoid touching them. As the wings expand we can see the veins spreading farther and farther apart, and the folds becoming effaced. The expansion is apparently due to the injection of liquid into the veins. . . More than two hours are often necessary before the wings can be spread out horizontally, and two or three hours more are required before they are able to bear the weight of the body. All the time that the wings are expanding the abdomen is being gradually prolonged.'

It is quite evident that the insect, during the transformation, is the very type of timorous help-

lessness, and the savage younger larvae are said to sometimes leave the water and dine upon the juicy probationer. Critical indeed is the time, for any injury received at this period is certainly permanent, if not fatal.

Although such an enormous change has taken place in its external features, the animal has lost none of its native ferocity, and the brightly-coloured fly, darting hither and thither in the sunshine, preys as pitilessly upon its insect contemporaries as in its youth it dominated the pond. Its powerful wings and keen sight render it as formidable in the air as its terrible mask did in the water, and the gaily fluttering butterfly finds a short shrift if it carelessly invades the hunting-ground of its merciless foe. One by one the beautiful wings are shorn off, and the body is speedily devoured.

No one could fail to be struck with the singularly perfect adaptation of the insect's structure to a life of aerial piracy. The four wings are large, and, in proportion to their weight, enormously strong. Each is supported by a wonderfully-arranged network of slender ribs, which give the necessary rigidity to the thin, transparent membrane forming its basis. The muscles by which the wings are moved are massive and powerful, and are so arranged among themselves that the animal is capable of steering

its course with an unerring accuracy which any bird might envy. In this power it is largely aided by a marvellous keenness of sight; for, in addition to the two great, gorgeously-coloured compound eyes which make up so much of the head, the insect possesses three smaller 'simple' eyes, making five eyes in all. The prey when overtaken is seized and devoured by means of powerful, sharply-toothed jaws.

An animal which lives such an active life naturally requires a very perfect breathing apparatus, and this is amply provided by a system of holes on the sides of the body which open into an elaborate network of air-tubes, supplying every part of the system. The air in these tubes is constantly renewed by the regular compression and dilatation of the body by special muscles.

The dragon-fly also finds time for domestic duties, and its long abdomen is of service in enabling it to deposit its eggs below the surface of the pond without actually entering the water.

In the fullness of time the eggs hatch, and give rise to another generation of larvae as hideous and savage as the last. Overhead, the winged insect disports itself merrily in the sun, until Nemesis overtakes it at last, and it provides a delectable morsel for one of the birds which alone dispute with it the empire of the air.

JOHN BURNET OF BARNS.

CHAPTER XXXI.—I FALL IN WITH STRANGE FRIENDS.



LAY there, still with fright and anxiety, while the wind roared around my hiding-place, and the noise of the horses' feet came to my ears. My first thought was to rush out and meet my pursuers, engage the company, and get the letter back by force. But a moment's reflection convinced me that this was equal to rushing on my death. There was nothing for it but to bide where I was, and pray that I might not be discovered.

The noise grew louder, and the harsh voices of the men echoed in the little glen. I lay sweating with fear, and I know not what foreboding, as I heard the clatter of hoofs among the slates, and the heavy tread of those who had dismounted and were searching every tuft of heather. I know not to this day how I escaped. It may be that their eyes were blinded with mist and rain; it may be that my hiding-place was secure than I thought, for God knows I had no time to choose it; it may be that their search was but perfunctory, since they had got the letter; it may be that they thought in their hearts that I had escaped over the back of Caerdon, and searched only to satisfy their leader. At any rate, in a little all was still, save for the sound of retreat-

ing voices, and with vast caution and great stiffness of body I drew myself from the hole.

I have rarely felt more utterly helpless and downcast. I had saved my skin, but only by a hair-breadth, and in the saving of it I had put the match to my fortunes. For that luckless letter gave the man into whose hands it might fall a clue to Marjory's whereabouts. It is true that the thing was slight, but still it was there, and 'twas but a matter of time till it was unravelled. All was up with me. Now that I was thus isolated on Caerdon and the far western ridges of the Tweedside hills, I could have little hope of getting free; for to return to safety I must cross either Holmes Water, which was guarded like a street, or the lower Tweed, which, apart from the fact that it was in roaring flood, could no more be passed by me than the gates of Edinburgh. But I give my word it was not this that vexed me; nay, I looked forward to danger, even to capture, with something akin to hope. But the gnawing anxiety gripped me by the throat that once more my poor lass would be exposed to the amenities of my cousin, and her easy, quiet life at Smitwood shattered for ever. An unreasoning fit of rage took me, and I dashed my foot on the heather in my hopeless vexation. I cursed every

soldier, and wished for Gilbert the blackest torments which my heart could conjure.

But rage at the best is vain, and I soon ceased. It was, indeed, high time that I should be bestirring myself. I could not stay where I was, for, in addition to being without food or decent shelter, I was there on the very confines of the most dangerous country. Not two miles to the north from the place where I lay the hills ceased, and the low-lying central moorlands succeeded, which, as being a great haunt of the more virulent Whigs, were watched by many bands of dragoons. If my life were to be saved I must get back once more to the wild heights of the upper Tweed.

I climbed the gully, and keeping lower down the hill, made for the mountain named Coulter Fell, which is adjacent to Caerdon.

When I reached the head of the ridge I thought that the way was clear before me, and that I had outdistanced my pursuers. I stood up boldly on the summit, and looked down on the Holmes Water head. The next minute I had flung myself flat again, and was hastening to retrace my steps. For this was what I saw : all up the stream at irregular intervals dragoons were beating the heather in their quest for me. Clearly they thought that I had made for the low ground. Clearly, also, there was no hope of escape in that quarter.

With a heavy heart I held along the bald face of the great Coulter Fell. I know no more heartless mountain on earth than that great black scarp, which on that day flung its head far up into the mist. The storm, if anything, had increased in fury. Every now and then there came a burst of sharp hail, and I was fain to shelter for a moment by lying on the earth. Very circumspectly I went, for I knew not when, through the wall of mist, a gleam of buff coats or steel might meet me. In such a fashion, half-creeping, half-running, I made my way down the hills which flank the Coulter Water, and came at length to the range of low hills which look down upon Biggar and the lowlands of Clyde.

I struggled to the top and looked over into the misty haughs. The day was thick, yet not so thick that I could not see from this little elevation the plain features of the land below. I saw the tall trees of Coulter House, and the gray walls and smoking chimneys. Beyond was the road, thick with mud, and with scarce a traveller. All seemed quiet, and as I looked a wild plan came into my head. Why should I not go through the very den of the lion ? What hindered me from going down by the marsh of Biggar and the woods of Rachan, and thence to my hiding-place ? It was the high-roads that were unwatched in these days, and the byways which had each their sentinel.

But as I looked again the plan passed from my mind ; for there, below, just issuing from the gateway of Coulter House, I saw a man on horseback, and another, and still another. I needed no

more. A glance was sufficient to tell me their character and purport. Gilbert, verily, had used his brains to better advantage than I had ever dreamed of. He had fairly outwitted me, and the three airts of north and south and west were closed against me.

There still remained the east, and thither I turned. I was shut in on a triangle of hill and moorland, some three miles in length and two in breadth. At the east was the spur of hill at the foot of the Holmes Water, and above the house of Rachan. If I went thither I might succeed in crossing the breadth of the valley and win to the higher hills.

I do not very well remember how I crossed the Kilbucho glen, and stumbled through the maze of little streams and sheep-drains which covers all the place. At a place called Blendewig I lay down on my face and drank pints of water from the burn—a foolish action, which in my present condition was like to prove dangerous. In the pine-wood at the back of the sheiling I laid me down for a little to rest, and when once more I forced myself to go on I was as stiff as a ship's figure-head. In this state I climbed the little hills which line the burn, and came to the limit of the range above the place called Whiteslade.

It was now about two o'clock in the afternoon, and the storm, so far from abating, grew every moment in fierceness. I began to go hot and cold all over alternately, and the mist-covered hills were all blurred to my sight like a boy's slate. Now, by Heaven ! thought I, things are coming at last to a crisis. I shall either die in a boghole, or fall into my cousin's hands before this day is over. A strange perverted joy took possession of me. I had nothing now to lose. My fortunes were so low that they could sink no farther. I had no cause to dread either soldier or weather. And then my poor silly head began to whirl, and I lost all power of anticipation.

To this day I do not know how I crossed the foot of the Holmes valley—for this was what I did. The place was watched most jealously, for Holmes Mill was there, and the junction of the roads to the upper Tweed and the moors of Clyde. But the thing was achieved ; and my next clear remembrance is one of crawling painfully among the low birk-trees and cliffs on the far side of the Wormel. My knees and hands were bleeding, and I had a pain in my head so terrible that I forgot all other troubles in this supreme one.

It was now drawing towards evening. The gray rain-clouds had become darker, and the shadows crept over the sodden hills. All the world was desert to me, where there was no shelter. Dawyck and Barns were in the hands of the enemy. The cave of the Cor Water was no more. I had scarce strength to reach my old hiding-place in the hags above Scrape, and if I did get there I had not the power to make it habitable. A

gravelled and sanded couch with a heathery roof is pleasant enough in the dry weather, but in winter it is no better than a bog-hole.

Nevertheless I slid down the hill as best I could, and set myself to crossing the valley. It was half-filled with water-pools which the flood had left, and at the far side I saw the red, raging stream of Tweed. I remember wondering without interest whether I should ever wade over or drown there. It was a matter of little moment to me. The Fates had no further power to vex me.

But ere I reached the hill-foot I saw something which made me pause, reckless though I had come to be. On the one hand there was a glimpse of men coming up the valley—mounted men, riding orderly as in a troop. On the other I saw

scattered soldiers dispersing over the haughland. The thought was borne in upon me that I was cut off at last from all hope of escape. I received the tidings with no fear, scarcely with surprise. My sickness had so much got the better of me that though the heavens had opened I would not have turned my head to them. But I still staggered on, blindly, nervelessly, wondering in my heart how long I would keep on my feet.

But now in the little hollow I saw something before me, a glimpse of light, and faces lit by the glow. I felt instinctively the near presence of men. Stumbling towards it I went, groping my way as if I were blindfold. Then some great darkness came over my brain, and I sank on the ground.

A HOLIDAY ON LOCH TAY SIDE.

By Rev. HUGH MACMILLAN, D.D., LL.D., F.R.S.E.



SPENT my summer holidays in a recent year at a farmhouse near the head of Loch Tay. It is a charming spot, situated where two large burns—that rise, the one from the corrie behind Mael Ghlás, and the other from Loch Larig, at the summit of the Glenlyon pass—flow down the declivity in many a foaming waterfall to the loch a short distance from each other. Several huge plane-trees of great age form an avenue leading from the high-road almost to the door. These ancestral trees, and the scanty remains of a baronial castle near at hand, indicate that the place must once have been of considerable importance.

The view in all directions is magnificent. Westward, over a series of undulating heights, rises up the lofty cone of Ben More, filling all the horizon in that direction. Below, to the south, the smooth, dark waters of Loch Tay occupy the long trench-like hollow between the hills; and beyond, on the other side, the mountain slopes climb up to the sky-line adorned with fertile pastures and sunny copses. The shores of the loch are fringed with woods; and the water-channels that seam the sides of the hills have lines of shrubby vegetation veiling them from the summer heat and marking out their course. Here and there on some lonely knoll, or beside a secluded burn, are the dismantled ruins of once flourishing croft-houses and hamlets, from which the inhabitants were driven out to give place to sheep-holdings or larger farms. The sight of these relics of the past fills one with sadness, and raises perplexing questions regarding the rights and duties of property. But whether the expulsion of the hardy and honest natives, whose forefathers had tilled the ground from time immemorial, was justifiable or not, it is at least

certain that it has turned out for the best; for they all have thriven wonderfully in those Canadian or Australian settlements to which they betook themselves, and to which they gave, with a pathetic patriotism, the old beloved names of home. Here and there the monotony of the green pastures is diversified by large patches of crimson heather, shining in the afternoon light as if the sunset glow had settled permanently upon them. At the back of the house the ground slopes up gradually to the lofty summit of Mael Ghlás, with a corner of the highest part of Ben Lawers standing out in darker hue behind the green shoulders of the hill. This view gives an alpine appearance to the landscape; and when veiled in dense clouds, the crags and corries under the dark fringes of mist look sombre in the extreme, and lead the imagination up to an unknown Cimmerian realm of storm and mystery.

Portions of old querns and two barley mortars lying neglected near the kitchen door of the farmhouse set me thinking of the primitive agriculture of former times in this part of the Highlands. It certainly must have been of the rudest kind. The people had not appliances for the removal of the great boulders which cumbered the ground, and they simply turned up the soil round them in patches here and there. The marshes, also, were only partially drained, and the lower slopes of the hills were rendered impassable by the overflowing waters of the streams. In these circumstances the farmers sought the higher grounds, where the soil was drier, and the line of boulders which marked the height of the old glacial stream fell short of the limits of cultivation, and there were fewer encumbrances in the shape of wood and stone to remove from the soil. Accordingly we

find most of the old tillage on the uplands. But there were other obstacles to contend with there. The heather, being native to the soil, and best adapted to the situation, was a more formidable weed to keep at bay than the common weeds of the fields at the base of the hills, and began at once to encroach upon the green enclosure during the slightest relaxation of toil and care. Owing to the latitude and altitude, the corn and barley did not ripen till a late period, and had to encounter the storms and floods which usually occurred at the close of autumn. And not once, but many times during a crofter's lease, must have happened what took place on one occasion on the minister's glebe in the far north. The minister's man, shearing the corn in the beginning of October in an exceptionally favourable season, was asked by an English tourist passing by if the soil in the neighbourhood was good. The minister's man replied that the stranger could judge for himself; for this year they had two crops on that very field. The stranger went away considerably mystified; but the true explanation was that the previous crop had not been gathered in till January, and now in October of the same year they were reaping another crop.

Lochtaiside has always been more a pastoral than an agricultural region. The growth of corn has been subordinate to the raising of sheep and cattle. The mountains are remarkably green to the very top, only a small portion of heather being found here and there, and yield rich natural grass for the large herds that roam over them. But before the invention of artificial food and the growth of turnips, when the cattle all the year round fed upon the natural pastures, there was no provision made for their upkeep when these pastures were hid under several feet of snow. We read how, in these circumstances, the cattle that were sheltered in the byres were reduced almost to starvation, and yielded hardly any milk. All that is now changed. The population of the district, greatly thinned by emigration to our large cities and to the Colonies, are able to maintain themselves in comfort; and nowhere can finer fields of potatoes be seen than on the slopes of these hills, finding there a soil and situation similar to the conditions of their native country, and therefore most conducive to their welfare in a foreign land.

I spent a good deal of my holiday-time in exploring the numerous traces which the old population of the district had left behind; for the paths of a vanished race seemed to breathe over every height and hollow. I found the task, though melancholy, exceedingly suggestive. I wandered over the dim paths which they had made, and which were now almost obliterated by the foot-steps of time. I lingered beside the lonely ruins of the houses where they lived, and where the nettle grew luxuriantly round the cold hearth-

stone, and the solitary rowan that overshadowed them had failed to charm away the witchcraft of change and death that comes some time or other to every human family. I followed up the rough, winding peat-roads, over broken bridges and quaking marshes, till I stood beside the dark bogs where they used to cut their fuel, and which still showed ineffaceable touches of their sturdy toil, although Nature, with her luxuriant growth of mosses and lichens, strove to bring them back to her universal bosom. But what interested me most were the remains of the hoary sheilings, which I found scattered over the uplands in considerable numbers. There was one cluster especially that attracted my notice on account of its large size and apparently great age. I found these sheilings in the corrie of Ben Lawers, following up the old zigzag peat-track on the western bank of the Carie Burn till the first plateau is reached, where the people used to make peats. Here was a curious assemblage of circular foundations made of stones and turf, and looking wonderfully green in contrast with the dark bogs around them—an oasis in the wilderness. All tradition of these sheilings has disappeared in the district; and several hundreds of years must therefore have elapsed since they had been in active use.

I used to sit within one of these broken-down huts—often when the shades of evening were beginning to fall, and to cast the brown hue over the landscape which is so conducive to meditation—and try to picture the curious state of things which they so vividly recalled. What an idyllic mode of life that residence in the mountain sheiling during the summer months of long ago must have been! It has disappeared from Scotland for nearly a hundred years; but it still survives in Norway and Switzerland. In the *saeter* of the Norwegian fjelds and in the *chdlet* of the Swiss Alps we have a picture of what the old life of the Scotch sheiling must have been.

I have said that the cultivation of the Highlands was in former times more on the heights than in the valleys, in places that are now overgrown with heather on the moorlands. But, higher than the highest line of corn-growing fields, there are spots among the hills where a carpet of the greenest and smoothest turf is laid among the brown heather and the black peat-moss. Some bright knolls, covered with the most compact grass, rise above the quaking marshes; and on the sheltered side of one of these green mounds, where the ground is especially dry and hard, the rude sheiling was built of the rough stones lying about, without any cement, and roofed with branches of trees and bits of sod. It had no comforts of any kind, and barely afforded shelter from the elements. The inmates, especially when the weather was severe, had to rough it in a way that would have astonished our modern tramps and lowest poor. They lived an almost entirely open-air life, con-

stantly engaged in watching their cattle and in milking them at suitable times, and storing the milk and converting it into butter and cheese. Beside the sheiling there was always a little rill that flowed past all day with its manifold voices, as it rippled over its irregular bed or fell over a barrier rock in lines of white foam into swirling brown pools, and all night sang its quiet tune, while the moonlight whitened the rude stones under whose shelter human hearts were dreaming. The water of the streamlet was necessary not only for drinking, but also for washing the milk-dishes and preparing the butter. Around were patches of verdure scattered over the stony hillsides or over the rugged corries; and there the dun-coloured cows browsed diligently all day, and obediently came to be relieved of their milky spoil at the call of the maidens.

To these sheilings the grown-up women of the farm retired about the beginning of June each year, and remained in this seclusion among the hills, far from the dwellings of their nearest neighbours, till the end of August or September, when the labours of the harvest demanded their help, and when the shortening days and the decaying verdure reminded them of the necessity of returning to the farm in the low grounds. But the maidens were not so solitary as one might suppose. Young men, their friends and sweethearts, came up from the farms from time to time to cheer them when their own work was over. And the romance of love in such novel circumstances shed a halo over the passing hours. The pathetic song of the 'Flowers of the Forest' alludes to the courting of the lads and lasses among the green knowes around the mountain sheiling. The maidens, when left alone, often beguiled the time in singing; and many a beautiful Gaelic song describes the charm of this simple pastoral life. One of the oldest and most popular of the Highland songs is a sheiling song called 'Crodh Callein,' or 'Collin's Cattle,' whose music afterwards developed into the plaintive tune of 'Lochaber no more.' It is curious how this emigrant's farewell of Scotland, which breathes the purest love of country, should have grown out of a cow-song like the 'Ranz des Vaches' of Switzerland. The song of 'Crodh Callein' marks the transition from the huntsman's life to the pastoral and agricultural. The first was considered for a long time the nobler and manlier mode of life; and it was with reluctance that the roving huntsman settled down to the tame pursuits of the shepherd and farmer. By-and-by, as the old mode of life receded into the past, and the new became more common and confirmed, a well-stocked farm and a herd of milk-giving cattle browsing around the sheiling were thought far more of than the huntsman's skill and daring and the chance products of the chase. The song in question indicates the beginning of this preference; for the cattle of Collin, who was a hunts-

man, were in reality the wild deer of the mountain, and they were cunningly alluded to under figures of speech which changed their identity, and made them seem the cattle of the byre and the sheiling, as if only under this semblance were they of any consideration.

It not infrequently happened that what was called a *creach* took place in some lonely mountain sheiling, and the cattle were carried away by marauders of another clan, to the great mortification and sorrow of the helpless maidens in charge. There is a story of such a *creach* that happened about two hundred and fifty years ago, and gave rise to another popular Highland song. The men of Keppoch at that time came down in force upon the defenceless sheiling of Cashlie near the head of Glenlyon, in the neighbourhood of where I was staying. They carried away all the cattle and the two dairymaids who were in charge of them. The Glenlyon men, made aware of the raid, pursued them as they were marching northwards to their home, and, coming upon them at the west end of the glen, a desperate fight ensued, in which the reavers were defeated with great loss. During the combat one of the dairymaids was slain; and the other was brought back by the victors to Meggerney Castle, where she composed the touching song descriptive of her feelings on the harrowing occasion. The name of this musical Highland maid has not survived, although that of her companion who was killed has been handed down to us and associated with a cairn still standing on the scene of the tragedy, called Carn Mic Cridhe, or Macrie's Cairn. Memories of love and war are connected with the gray ruins of the sheilings; and the names of some of them recall many a stirring deed. The effect of this mode of life in developing the musical and poetic instincts of the people is remarkable. It would furnish many a picturesque theme for the romance-writer. In this field there is hid a rich treasure of human story waiting to be appropriated by some original genius—as a new kind of kailyard literature. On the shoulders and in the corrie of Mael Ghlas, and up in the gloomy ravine of Larich-an-Lochan, there are ruins of numerous sheilings, bearing witness to a large population that once inhabited this part of Lochtayside. In the wild recesses of Creag-an-Lochan, the growth of the nettle around shapeless heaps of mossy stones still testifies to human occupation, and shows how, as in Switzerland, the wildest parts of the Scottish mountains were not left to waste their scanty crops of spontaneous grass uneaten by the cattle of the dairymaid.

Talking one day with my landlord, the farmer, whose own wife was seriously ill at the time, about the sanitary condition of the locality, he made the shrewd remark that in olden times the country people were much more healthy than they are now; and he attributed the cause to the variety which the pursuits of the summer-sheiling gave to their life.

They had in the transition from the low grounds to the heights of the mountains a complete change of air and scene ; and even the food was, if possible, plainer, and the mode of life was brought back to the primitive simplicity of Nature. Whereas at the present day the occupations of the farmer have no such complete transitions. They are continuously carried on in the same place from year's end to year's end without any change or break. And even the summer holidays in the south, which are made possible by the near presence of the railway, are no real compensation for the loss of the sheiling life. For such holidays are more artificial than the farmer's ordinary existence, and bring the fever and the worry of the great world to make his pulse beat faster, instead of laying upon his wearied energies the calm, cool hand of Nature in ancient repose, like a mother's blessing.

What a change has come over the Highlands in recent years ! In olden times it was the Highlands that invaded the Lowlands, and carried off much spoil and blackmail. But now the condition of things is reversed, and it is the Lowlands that are invading the Highlands every year and paying down good money of the realm for the sight of purple mountain heights, and for the honey breath of crimson heather, and the fragrance of fir-forests and bog-myrtle. Every spot, even the loneliest and most inaccessible, is crowded with summer visitors from the south ; and instead of the soft accents of the Gael you hear the high tones of Ludgate Hill and Bedford Street. We read of the old Celtic saints wandering over the scantily populated districts of the north in search of a solitude in which no hermit had built his cell, and being frustrated in their efforts ; for in every glen and island there was some holy man already located, leading a life 'by heaven too much oppressed.' But still more vain would be a search nowadays for some spot in which one could spend a summer holiday apart from all associations of one's ordinary life, 'the world forgetting, by the world forgot.'

Every one feels the craving for change. Life is

so busy and conventional that there is an ardent desire to go back for a few days or weeks each year to the quiet simplicity of Nature. Dr Louis Robinson, in a recent article in the *National Review*, endeavours to show why it is that change of air does us so much good. He traces the reason back to primitive habits and ancestral instincts. Mankind have passed through three stages of life—the hunting, the pastoral, and the agricultural. For countless generations our ancestors were obliged to roam about in search of the game on which they lived, and it is only within a comparatively short period that their descendants have settled down to agricultural pursuits. Dr Robinson holds that the old vagrant habits of the nomadic stage of life through which we have passed have become a part of our physical inheritance, and that, therefore, the confinement of our large cities and stated occupations, being a violence to this second nature, is apt to develop evil consequences, especially when for some reason or other the general vitality has been lowered ; and therefore a renewal of the vagrant conditions to which our constitution was originally adapted might be expected to contribute to the recovery of a good state of health. This reason may seem far-fetched ; but it is undoubtedly true that we have all, from the highest to the lowest, a strong spice of the savage in our nature ; and a longing at times comes over us to break loose from the restraints of civilisation and revel in the wild freedom of our barbarian ancestors. The grouse-shooting fever may be one of the periodical ebullitions of the original temperament ; and the deerstalker's enthusiasm every autumn seems to bring back the hunting stage of primitive life. But to all of us the annual reversion to simple, hardy life is a gratification which is felt all the more keenly the more that ordinary life is artificial and restrained. And though every one cannot on occasions return to the hunting stage of life like our wealthy classes—for, strange to say, it now costs too much—yet we can all return to the nearest approximation to the pastoral stage, and experience in some degree the benefits of the old sheiling-life among the mountains.

F R I D A P E T E R S E N ' S L O V E R .

By CHARLES EDWARDES.

IN TWO PARTS.—PART I.



HEY were bringing old Petersen from his farm in Siov to lay him in the Thorshavn churchyard.

'Easy, boys,' exclaimed the handsome young man who sat in the stern of the boat, side by side with Frida, the dead man's daughter. They round the basalt rocks which hedge in Thorshavn's little har-

bour : terrible rocks against which no vessel would have a chance in anything like a storm. Then, as they swept round into the haven, the young man's eyes were suddenly caught and his attention held by the imposing form of a British gunboat, with the Union-jack flying at its stern.

'She come in the night,' whispered one of the oarsmen. 'It is for to protect the Shetland and the

Grimsby men off the Iceland waters. The French, they too have a warship; but there will be no trouble. The officers will give themselves dinners and shoot things, and so they will return.'

Frida, pale and grief-worn though she was, seemed almost as much interested in the fine vessel as was her companion; but only for a moment. A gun was fired from the tiny fort on the end of the basaltic headland. Then they heard the tiny tinkle of the church bell—the church itself white and tall above the other black little houses of the town, saved from absolute gloominess only by the green turf on their gabled roofs. This was in honour of old Petersen. He had been a worthy Faroeman, known and respected by all the eleven thousand inhabitants of the isles.

Hearing these sounds, the girl again covered her pale face with her hands, and let her long yellow hair fall to the front. As she bowed forward in her distress the yellow hair caught the sunshine, so that it looked like spun gold. It certainly contrasted wondrously with the plain black coffin which stretched from her feet forward. The coffin bore neither flowers nor covering: only the words, 'Jens Petersen, aged 69.' It was ugly and forbidding in its sombre nakedness. But it held nearly all in the world that Frida cared for.

The young man put his arm round the girl's waist and gazed at her with genuine sympathy, and more than sympathy. Then he whispered, so that none else could hear his words:

'Sweetheart, bear thyself up; it will soon be over. The old man is happy; and remember he said almost with his last breath that he wished *you* not to be unhappy about losing him.'

This comfort seemed to have much effect upon Frida. She raised her head and looked at her companion with her placid, tear-stained blue eyes. Her restraint before the four stout peasants in blue mob-caps was pathetic in its childishness. Yet why should she think of dissembling? Had not the four oarsmen been born and bred on her father's land, worked and fished for and been tended by him alone? And did not they and all Kollefjord know full well that young Graham, though not a Faroeman, was as good as plighted to her?

On arriving at the pier quite two hundred people followed the corpse to the church, and afterwards to the bare and even repellent little God's-acre among the heather and rocks outside the town. He had been an uncommon sort of Faroeman. His daughter was more beautiful by far than most Faroe girls; and the inclusion of young Graham in his household some three years back had seemed so very audacious a step, only justified, as it happened, by the young stranger's exceptional qualities both of person and ability.

Graham and Frida were, of course, the chief mourners. And, to tell the truth, as they walked arm-in-arm, the scores of women and girls, with

black silk handkerchiefs over their heads, paid much more attention to these two than to the service or the solemn lesson which the scene ought presumably to have taught them.

Douglas Graham was six feet high and well made. He was what the Faroese call 'a fine man'; yet there was that in his face which, though strongly inspiring confidence (affection the girls would have said), hinted at certain experiences which had left their mark on his mind.

But when the service was ending and the pastor had cast his three shovelfuls of earth into the grave, a knot of British sailors strolled into the cemetery, with a petty officer or two among them. They were reverent enough, yet they immediately distracted the attention of most of the company. A ray of sunlight stole through the fog immediately over the cemetery and shone upon the gold hatband of one of the man-of-war's men. One of these latter had barely time to murmur to his comrade, 'That's a pretty girl,' indicating Frida, when the funeral group broke up. This was the moment the poor girl most dreaded. She trembled on Douglas Graham's arm as she looked her last at the forbidding black box (made and painted at home) which held her father.

'Sweetheart,' whispered Douglas when he had again wrapped up Frida in the warm shawls of her own knitting, and in other respects made her as comfortable as possible, 'now I have you all to myself I will be father, and husband, and brother to you, please God!'

The girl could only sob for reply; but she thrust her little hand between his two sinewy brown ones when they were again out in the harbour; and thus hand-in-hand they made the return voyage. The sea was again all a-sparkle with sunlight, and the capricious Faroe fog clung only to the sides of the distant mountain of Naalsoe.

Meanwhile the men ashore from her Majesty's gunboat *Goshawk* had divided into two groups. Of the one group one of the sailors had sauntered, or rather 'slithered' (so he said), down the greasy, malodorous steps cut in the rock which led them into the heart of poor little Thorshavn town.

Of the other group a petty officer named Porteous was the leading spirit. Hardly had Porteous come into the cemetery than something seemed to affect him strongly. He stared at Douglas Graham with might and main, and only latterly at Frida. It was difficult to say which of the two moved him the more.

Afterwards, however, he signified his intention of returning at once to the ship. This was when he had seen the mortuary boat rowed off to the north.

'Jack,' he said to one of the men, 'I mean to follow that little craft, and so, if you've no particular objection, we'll just get leave and chase 'em.'

The others would have preferred to stay in Thorshavn, but Nick Porteous was not a man to be

opposed in anything. Soon, therefore, they were once more alongside the gunboat, and then pulled off in a northerly direction. The requisite permission had easily been obtained. The barometer was consoling, and the *Goshawk* had been at sea so long that it would have been hard lines to refuse this one day's pleasureing, especially to so valuable a man as Porteous.

'Pull hard, my lads,' said this person when he had seated himself and taken the tiller in hand. 'They've got a good start, but you'll want flogging if you can't catch these Johnnies with straw beards before they get ashore.'

One of Porteous's intimates began jesting with him about this petticoat-chase, as he called it. But Porteous was not in a humour for fun of this kind, and he showed it.

'I don't mind telling you, Jim,' he said, 'that I'm a bit curious about you long-legged fellow who was alongside the girl at the grave. If I didn't know him at Kirkwall a few years back, I'm very much mistaken. If he's the man, then he'd better look out for squalls, for I've as tough a bone to pick with him as he'll have in his lifetime.'

The other laughed. 'If that's so, Nick,' he said, 'he can have all the picking of it with you. I'd not like to be in *his* shoes—queer shoes they wear up here, don't they?'

'There's this, though,' said Porteous. 'I don't want to let on that I'm the man I am till I've got to know more about him. I'm much changed since then, what with beard and all—and especially with this beauty-mark—for which he's responsible.'

Porteous touched a great scar running from his left eye to his beard. It was an ugly scar, but not half so ugly as the expression in his face.

'Now then, there, no loafing—pull, you fellows!' he cried the next moment.

But scarcely had half-an-hour passed ere Porteous and the others were fain to confess that the Faroemen were as clever with their oars as themselves. The boat with Douglas and Frida in it had turned into Kollefjord, while the *Goshawk's* boat was quite two miles distant from the head of the fjord.

Eventually, however, the man-of-war's men reached the channel and pulled for the shore. Kollefjord was at this moment in one of its fairest moods. The afternoon was an ideal August one for Faroe—a thought chilly, but not too much so. Besides the simple thatched cottages which dotted the northern shore of the fjord, from the sea-end of it to the extremity of the inlet, one other object demanded immediate notice. This was the great bulk of the famous Skellingfjeld, Strömö's highest mountain. It rose up from the end of the fjord like a tremendous wall; and a thousand feet up, another huge, precipitous rock-mass towered from it, like one great cube set erratically upon another. Eight days out of ten Skellingfjeld is not to be seen in its entirety. This afternoon it was unveiled to the summit. No wonder the Jack-tars were eager to

try and scale it. But Porteous straightway checked their enthusiasm in this matter.

'Not this time, my lads,' he said. 'We'll be back here in a month. Then we'll have a rattling fine picnic ashore, and it'll have to be a devilish tough mountain if we can't climb it then. What you have to do now is just to saunter about here, while I go off up the shore a bit.'

Porteous meanwhile had found guidance towards Petersen's farm. High up among the overhanging rocks could be seen the figure of a man. With his sharp vision Porteous had long ago determined that this was Douglas Graham. Had he doubted it he would have been less eager to steal a march on him.

In spite of the sad circumstances of the day, the maid-servant asked the officer into the house immediately. To give him his due, Porteous felt that he was a brute. But that did not deter him from his intention to play a brute's part.

Frida came to him at length, pale and listless.

'Be so good,' she explained at once, 'as to excuse me from welcoming you. I have to-day buried my dear father. But Marta shall provide refreshment, which you will be so good as to enjoy.'

Porteous was eager in apologising for his intrusion.

'I should not,' he said, 'have come if I had not seen an old acquaintance with you just now in Thorshavn—Douglas Graham, or I'm much mistaken.'

'Oh! do you know Douglas?' cried the girl, clasping her hands.

'I know him well enough to hope that you are not married to him,' said Porteous slowly and emphatically. The ghoul noted with avidity the shadow that flitted upon the girl's face at these words.

'What does that mean?' she asked.

'It means just this. Three years ago Douglas Graham killed a man. He escaped hanging by—coming here, I suppose. That is all. Douglas Graham is a murderer.'

'A—h!' She did not understand at first. Her English was not irreproachable. But the word 'murderer' struck her to the heart. She sighed—and swooned. Faroe maidens are not generally of the swooning kind, but Frida had been sorely tried of late, and this last blow was too much for her.

Porteous had not expected this. He had hoped the chance might offer for a love-passage or two on his own account. But he had to be content that he had cast his dart.

One thing, however, he could not resist. The girl's helplessness was his opportunity. He kissed the pale, chilled lips and the soft but colourless cheeks, and then went away.

'Back, my lads!' he cried quite gaily when they were in the boat again. 'And there's not one of you will be more eager to call here on our way south than Nick Porteous.'

THE FINEST CYCLING ROUTE IN THE WORLD.

By JOHN FOSTER FRASER.

FEVERY wheelman is nowadays looking afield for new cycling worlds to conquer. The man who suggests a new ride which is pleasant and easy, with not too many hills to climb, which takes him to wonderful places full of historic interest, and through beautiful scenery, and where he need never have any fear of indulging in profanity owing to rain, is regarded somewhat in the light of a public benefactor.

I have no wish to be regarded in that spirit ; but as I have ridden over what is undoubtedly the finest cycling route in the world, I think there are others who would care to follow my example. A few years ago such a suggestion would have been useless, for then cycling was a distinctly plebeian amusement, followed by men who had only a month's, or a fortnight's, or less, holiday in the year. But now that bicycles are ridden by folks who belong, as Mr Toole would say, to the 'upper suckles,' and to whom time is not so much a consideration, there are no doubt hundreds of people who are willing to travel for a good bicycle ride.

The road I have in my mind is in India, and stretches twelve hundred miles from Lahore to Calcutta. It is the famous Grand Trunk Road. Let me explain its nature, though one cannot do so by comparison, for there is no road of five miles in England that is anything like it. It is level ; indeed, there is not above a mile the whole distance where even a lady need dismount to walk. Around Battersea Park is supposed to be the easiest little spin in London. The Grand Trunk Road is infinitely superior to Battersea Park. The material with which it is made is called *kunker* ; and if you care to turn that word into concrete, you have an idea of what it is like. It is exceedingly hard, and as smooth as a prepared pavement. There is no dust. When I first got on this road and enjoyed the luxury of easy travelling, I said, 'This is magnificent ; but in a little time I suppose it will become gritty and uneven.' I went fifty miles, one hundred miles, two hundred miles, five, six, seven hundred miles, and it was always the same, with not even a small stone to give a jog. Nearly the whole of the way is lined with a double row of majestic trees. The concrete road runs like a long white ribbon down the centre, and along each side are loose-soil tracks, over which the native bullock-carts creak a slow two miles an hour.

With two friends I rode across India during the hottest time of the year, in April and May, and was never seriously inconvenienced by the heat ; for, at a pace of fifteen miles an hour, one could always create a draught. In the winter

months, from December till March, thousands of English people go to India sight-seeing. They are rushed in the train from one city to another ; they see the fine buildings and a few fine bazaars, but they don't see India as it might be seen. Therefore, I would say to people going to India this coming winter : Take your bicycles with you ; and when you get to Lahore abandon the train and ride on your machines the rest of the way to Calcutta. After a short thirty-six miles' run out of Lahore you reach Amritsar, the great Sikh city, with its marvellous Golden Temple and quaint, picturesque scenes ; you go on to Umballa, and run down to historic Delhi, with its marble mementoes of the Great Moguls ; you reach Agra, and grow poetical under the full moon while sitting before the Taj Mahal, the most bewitching monument in the wide world ; you ride through a country reminiscent of the Mutiny to Cawnpore, and, if you like, take a turn off to the left and visit Lucknow ; you speed on to Allahabad, and cross the holy river Ganges, and in one day, if you have a mind, reach Benares the sacred, the city of ten thousand temples. Then you drop into Bengal, where you get runs through wild jungle and a land full of nodding palms and rich giant vegetation ; for one day you hasten through the coal district of North India, and then you reach the jungle again, where gorgeous-plumed birds whirl in the air, and groups of monkeys spring from bough to bough accompanying you. You rest a night in a little patch of French territory, Chandernagore, in a French hotel, by the side of a lovely boulevard overlooking the broad waters of the Hooghly ; and then, after another twenty-five miles, you are in Calcutta, the city of palaces. And besides all these, you have been through thousands of villages ; you have actually seen native Indian life, the hooded bullock-carts in which the purdah ladies travel, and the palanquins in which the rich rajahs are carried ; you have seen the Hindu in his little wayside temple, and altogether you have got some idea of the physical and picturesque aspects of India.

'Yes,' the reader will say ; 'but how about accidents, food, and sleeping accommodation ?' Now, I would not advise a cyclist who cannot have a nut screwed without the assistance of a cycle repairer to go on such a journey. But the man who can repair a puncture and attend to the ordinary necessities of a machine need have no fear. I rode the entire distance with but a single puncture. As to the food, there are dák-bungalows at every twenty or thirty miles along the route. These are government houses built for the accommodation of travellers. At many of them is a cook, though I confess fowl is the staple and eternal dish, of which one soon gets tired. My friends and myself often covered seventy and eighty,

and sometimes a hundred, miles a day; and as for a thousand miles the road is never more than five or six miles from the railway, we usually had dinner and breakfast at one of the many refreshment-rooms, and then carried something in our bags for lunch. Of course we slept at the dák-bungalows. There is just enough discomfort and slight hardship to make the expedition interesting. There are beds, but no mattresses or pillows. But a man who likes to rough it can easily turn his coat into a pillow.

Of course there are those who would like to cycle over this fine road, but want none of the attendant inconveniences. To those there is a plan of travelling in positive luxury. At Lahore they could employ a native servant, speaking English, who could travel each day by train to the afternoon's destination with baskets of food, wine, and the necessary bedding. Everything would be ready

at the dák-bungalows before the cyclists arrived. At only one part of the route would this be impossible—namely, for some two hundred and fifty miles after leaving Benares, on the way through Bengal. But there are cooks at most of the dák-bungalows there, and even in out-of-the-way villages I have found shops selling European delicacies.

The climate of India is exquisite during the cold weather. There is never any rain. There is delightful scenery, fine historic cities, and a road which has not its like on the earth. I have cycled in many strange corners of the world; but I will always regard the Grand Trunk Road from Lahore to Calcutta as the paradise of wheelmen. And now to English cyclists with leisure and means, and desiring to spend an enjoyable month, I would say: Go this winter to India and ride those twelve hundred miles.

MURCHISON'S MARCH.

A STORY OF ALASKA.

By HAROLD BINDLOSS, Author of *How they took the Olga out*, &c.



They may interest some to learn that the auriferous wealth of the Yukon region is by no means a new discovery. Gold has long been found in more or less paying quantities throughout the basin of the great river, and five years ago a party of miners came down with the writer from Alaska, bringing out nearly five hundred ounces. They went up into the wilderness seven in number; but three had laid their bones among the gloomy cañons, and the rest would carry the memory of that journey with them all their lives, they said. Hitherto, however, glacier-ribbed range, snowy pass, and foaming torrent have barred the gates of the northern Eldorado to all but the hardiest. It is also probable that the comparative few fortunate enough to discover the secrets of the hidden placers had reasons of their own for saying little of their success.

The outline of this story was told by a young Englishman, who once made a memorable march through the Alaskan snow, one autumn day when we lay in the shadow of the mighty redwoods above the black rocks guarding the entrance to Vancouver harbour. The wreck of the *Beaver*, the first steamer to enter the Pacific, lay beneath us, and there was snow upon the range across the sunny inlet, which, the narrator said, brought the scenes back more sharply.

A crackling fire of driftwood blazed among the boulders beside a lonely lake, far away among the snow-crested hills which lie between the Yukon and the Ko-wak rivers.

A cluster of weather-beaten, weary men were

seated about the fire, sucking lazily at their pipes, the red glow lighting up rugged faces that were bronzed by snow-glare as well as sun. They were a characteristic group—free prospectors to the manner born, ruined stock-raisers from the eastern plains, Ottawa lumbermen, and a few restless adventurers whose antecedents it would have been hard to guess. They had foregathered by treacherous ford and lonely pass on their hurried journey south, for winter was closing in unusually early that year, and there was no time to lose if they would reach safe quarters before every defile was choked with snow.

Presently an old miner drew closer in under the lee of a boulder. 'A bitter wind,' he said, 'an' six months dreary winter ahead, unless there's them among you fools enough to follow the Captain's lead.' Then the speaker dropped his voice a little as he added, 'Give it up, Murchison, an' winter at the Fort with the rest. It's temptin' Providence to cross the ranges now.'

A murmur of approval followed, and a tall, broad-shouldered man, with an indefinite something in face and manner which stamped him as different from the rest, though there were men of education among them too, laughed lightly as he answered, 'Well, we three are going to try. It's all a matter of taste; but being snowed up six months in a log hut when I've gold, and all the cities from 'Frisco to Mexico to spend it in, does not appeal to me. Eh, Jasper and Allen?'

Then a big Canadian who was leaning against a boulder straightened his gaunt form, and answered in a deliberate drawl, 'I'm with the Captain; but it's not a jamboree that's temptin'

me. I've struck enough to stock the clearin' way back by Superior shore ; and if it's any way possible to make the south bend of Yukon and catch the last steamer, I'm going to do it. I've had enough of Alaska to last my life.'

Geoffrey Allen, a young Englishman, and the third of the trio, nodded silently, and thought the more. He had sufficient reasons of his own to attempt the passage of the mountains in the face of any risks. Murchison and Jasper were his partners. They had met in the early spring by a certain glacier-barred pass, three men of widely different birth and character, who afterwards learned to trust and respect each other on the ground of a common manhood and courage. What Murchison's past had been Allen never knew ; but there was a reckless daring and unostentatious pride about the man, as well as a tone of command in all he said, which had gained him the sobriquet of Captain. Indeed, from odd sayings let fall at times, Allen gathered that he had once served her Majesty upon the sea. Jasper was different. He was merely a rough woodman, great with the double-bitted axe, and kindly in heart.

Presently the miner who had first spoken growled something about an early start, and the weary men dropped off to sleep one by one, while Allen lay rolled in his blanket beneath a boulder, looking out into the night. A bitter wind sighed through the pines above, and, crisping the open centre of the lake into ripples, set the fringe of ice heaving and crackling. Upon the farther shore he could see the rigid conifers rising darkly from the water's edge, while a line of snow, jagged and serrated, shone very cold and white against the deep indigo above. Then his thoughts went back to the shingle-roofed house by the sunny shores of Burrard Inlet, where he knew an anxious heart waited for the news of his safety which never came, and he determined that if it was in the power of man to force a way to the great river it should be done.

A hand was laid upon his shoulder, and Murchison flung himself down at his side. 'Still awake, partner?' he said. 'Thinking of the folks at home, and too anxious about the journey to sleep, eh?'

'Yes,' was the answer. 'We have been good comrades, Murchison. Listen to a little story—and then you'll understand. For three years I worked harder than any slave, breaking prairie in Manitoba, and twice the crop was good. Then Elsie came out from home, and we were married in Winnipeg. A few happy months followed, for the crop promised well and I had put my last cent into wheat. Then the hail came and wiped it out, smashed every blade and ear down into the earth, and left me a ruined man. I sold out for what I could get, took a little house for Elsie at Vancouver, and left her all I had in the world except enough to bring me here. The

money must be running very low, and what might happen when it's gone I dare not think. Here I am, with enough to start us fairly again—and get through I must.'

Murchison laughed bitterly. 'I did more than that for a woman once,' he said—'threw away caste and prospects—and she mocked me for it afterwards. There was another, too, who would have laid down her life for mine. Foolish, of course, but the best men and women who have crossed my path have been fools—and that's why I like you, Geoffrey. I was then— But let it pass ; the gates of that life are barred against me for ever.' The voice grew deeper, and Murchison added, half to himself : 'Stay up here with nothing to do for six months but think ; it would drive me mad.' Then he laughed his old careless laugh. 'Never mind me ; there's something on my nerves to-night. Sleep and dream of home.'

The young Englishman pillow'd his head on his arm, and his eyes grew very heavy ; but until he sank into dreamless sleep he could see a tall figure pacing to and fro across the shingle by the lake, and when he awakened he found Murchison's blanket about his shoulders as well as his own. Rising stiffly to his feet, he found breakfast prepared, and his two partners already feasting on very rusty pork and grindstone bread, while the rest of the miners were stirring and grumbling among their blankets. An icy wind went through him like a knife, and he shivered when he felt the chill of a feathery snow-flake on his face. Then, after a hasty meal, they loaded up a light Indian canoe—a thin shell of cedar-wood with a sweeping stem cut in the likeness of the head of a bird—with the last of their provisions and blankets, lashed her on to red-pine runners, and were ready to start.

The miners clustered round, and rugged men wrung the partners' hands as they wished them 'Good luck,' for 'the Captain' had a way which made many friends.

Murchison smiled as he answered, 'Good-bye ! I'll remember you among the snow when I'm basking in Mexico. Think of us still, sometimes, if we never meet again ;' and the three, followed by an Indian packer, breasted up the slope, with the snow driving in their eyes. It was not an easy climb, for fallen pines cumbered the way, and the canoe was hard to haul ; but, in a region of forests choked with fallen trees, glacier-seamed ranges, and countless torrents, a river is often the only road, and a canoe was almost indispensable. Presently the dwarf pines gave place to a slope of snow, the work became less toilsome, and at last they stood panting on the crest of the ridge.

Allen looked back, and saw a line of dark figures creeping along the margin of the lake. Afterwards he swept his glance southwards across

the chaos of snowy summits rising range beyond range, among whose defiles their pathway lay, and for a moment his heart sank as he contemplated the white wilderness before him.

Then Murchison smote him on the shoulder, and pointed to the long slope of snow, undulating white above, save where a blue-gray rock or stunted bush cropped through, and fringed below with sombre pines. 'The Indians' way is the best,' he said. 'Launch her off and save an hour's tedious easing down. Hang on forward, and I'll steer her with my feet. Get into the canoe for dead-weight, Jasper.'

'Not me,' answered the big Canadian emphatically; 'there's plenty ways of breaking one's neck easier than charging a pine at twenty miles an hour. That thing's not a toboggan, any way,' while Donovitch, the packer, smiled until his high cheek-bones almost hid his almond eyes, as he gave vent to a succession of sonorous 'u-chuck-chucks,' which doubtless meant something in his own tongue.

'Don't stand there grinning like a graven Siwash image, but thrust her off,' cried Murchison; and Jasper observed dryly, 'Guess we'll find you in the lake, if you ever get through the forest. Stand by, while we let her go.'

Allen braced his foot against the forward lashing, and leant upon the canoe as she commenced to slide down the slope; then the pace grew faster, and a rush of keen air smote his face like the lash of a whip. The hillside dropped more steeply, and a cloud of feathery particles whirled up from beneath the runners as the extemporised toboggan leapt forward at headlong speed.

'Hang on tight,' yelled Murchison, lying with his chest across the canoe and his left leg buried to the knee in the torn-up wake of snow, as he tried to swing her clear of a jutting patch of rock. But the canoe was not to be steered after the manner of a *touche-bleu* toboggan. She was going her own way now—the shortest to the bottom, across whatever might lie between. Next moment there was a grinding crash, and Allen felt every bone in his body shaken. The runners smoked as they hissed across the stone—and then they were flying downhill again, with the wind screaming past his ears and nearly taking his breath away.

'Exhilarating while it lasts—but there's trouble on hand below,' gasped a voice; and Allen shuddered as he watched the dark belt of pines rushing towards them from beneath. Then a bush of tall furze, or it might have been a cluster of young conifers, lay before them, and he saw half his comrade's length stretched out into the snow, with a white mass curling across the human rudder like the wash of a screw propeller. But again the rudder failed to act. The canoe drove straight down upon the obstacle, obliterated it from off the face of the snow, and with a mass

of broken brushwood piled about her, and the helmsman's garments torn to ribbons from ankle to knee, swept on towards the pines.

'I don't think she would go through a boulder, or a tree. Perhaps we had better jump,' Allen heard his comrade say; and, even as he pulled himself together for the leap, there was a sudden jolt, a wild lurch, and he was flung bodily through the air, and driven head-foremost into a bank of snow. When he sat up gasping and scraping the stuff from his eyes, he saw Murchison quietly poking a rammed-down mass of white from out the ragged sleeves of his deerskin jacket.

'If we could only travel all the way like that. You may thank the top of that boulder we didn't charge the wood,' said the latter, as though nothing unusual had happened. Twenty minutes later Jasper and the Indian arrived, when they righted the overturned craft, tightened the lashings, and, after easing her carefully down among the pines, launched out on a stream which swept through the winding gorge below.

For many following days they journeyed through a wilderness of wild and awful beauty, wherein but once or twice a white man had ever set his foot. At times they paddled and drifted hour after hour down some foaming rush of water stained pea-green by glacial clay, making toilsome portages to avoid the shallower rapids, for the streams were shrinking day by day as the frost bound fast the feeding glaciers on the heights above. At others they hewed a pathway with the axe through the network of fallen boughs and brushwood which choked the forests, or, with toil incredible, dragged the canoe over the crest of a divide.

Twice the thin ice in the centre of a forest-girt lake gave way beneath their feet; and once a great charred trunk in a 'brûlée,' or burnt forest, came thundering down across their path, and one blackened limb swept Jasper's hat from off his head.

But the rivers were open still, and generally these trended south in the direction they would go.

Then it came about that at last they drifted down a white-streaked rapid towards the mouth of a gloomy cañon, through which the river thundered, the spray rising like steam above it into the frosty air. Out of the haze there rose a hoarse, pulsating roar, the voice of many waters, and Allen shuddered as he gazed.

Murchison, however, surveyed it critically and approvingly. 'Very much like the mouth of Sheol,' he observed, 'or, to put it poetically as well as practically, a pathway driven for us through the heart of the eternal hills. How long it would take to cross that range, or if it could be done at all, Heaven only knows. I prefer going through by the road the river made.'

Jasper answered nothing for a while. He had learned the tricks of Canadian river 'lumbering'

by the banks of the Ottawa. Then he said, 'The Captain's right, and the river's the only way. But whether we'll come out at the other end men or ground-up bones is more than I can tell.'

Allen said no word, but clutched his paddle the tighter, and prepared to face what lay before them. Soon the giant walls of rock closed about the river; and, veiled in a haze of spray, the canoe slid on down a frothing swirl of water, while huge boulders, clinging pines, and ragged quartz-shelf went flashing by. Once, when they crossed an eddying black pool, he glanced aloft, and saw a sheer rise of blue-gray stone, stained vermillion in places and veined with milky quartz, towering so far overhead on either hand that the heavens above appeared a mere strip of blue. Then the intermittent boom of falling water drew swiftly nearer, and the Indian, crouching in the bows, pointed towards a slide of green where the river poured bodily over a ledge. There was a great spouting of white where it met the eddy below, and Allen noticed a curious flash in Murchison's eyes as he said, 'Will she ever go through, Jasper?'

'I've been down worse; but it's bad enough, and there's not foothold for a mink ashore,' was the answer. 'Ready with the paddles!' and Allen held his breath as they drove her towards the fall. For a moment the canoe slid steadily and upright down the centre of a smooth-skinned lip of green. Then she leapt forward—he could feel the light cedar dropping from beneath his feet—and with a mighty plunge drove out through the boiling confusion below.

'All together; paddle for your lives,' yelled Jasper, and the blades beat the water madly. Just in time, for the grasp of the whirling eddy had closed about the canoe, and was dragging her back stern-first towards the foot of the fall. For a few moments she hung stationary, and the veins stood out like whip-cord on the adventurers' foreheads as they plied the bending paddles. Then a curious funnel-mouth opened up beside them, and sucked down a fir-branch that floated past. Again and again the dripping paddles flashed, and foot by foot they drew out of the clutch of the side-swirl, until the central rush swept them out of the pool and down the boulder-strewn rapid beyond.

This was safely passed, and, just as darkness closed down, a narrow strip of shingle opened up in the mouth of a transverse gully, and they ran the canoe ashore. A roaring fire of resinous driftwood, which will burn when soaking wet, was made, a meal prepared, and then the four lay shivering in a narrow pit scooped out of the shingle, with their feet towards the fire.

Tired as he was, Allen could not sleep. A bitter wind swept sighing through the gorge, the mighty walls rang and vibrated with the roar of water, and he lay watching the red glow of the fire flicker across the face of the tossing rapid, and

the canoe swinging to and fro upon an eddy. He afterwards remembered that its mooring line slid across a shelf of rock at times. Murchison also was wide awake; in fact, he rarely seemed to sleep, and the two men often sat talking for hours as they shivered over the fire.

Presently he knocked the ashes out of his pipe and said sombrely, 'Allen, I would give all this yellow dross to be even as that savage, or the good-humoured and blindly-courageous animal by your side; and yet six years this very night there was no prouder man than I. I remember that night well, for something happened that left a mark.'

Then Murchison laughed, and added lightly, as he proceeded to refill his pipe, 'Probably this moralising palls upon you; but sometimes one cannot resist the childish delight of talking—and I like you, Allen.'

As had happened before, the younger man wondered whether his companion spoke in jest or earnest; therefore he only answered stolidly, 'Go on if it will do you good.'

Murchison frowned as he continued: 'I remember the roar of Spanish guns saluting the flag as our sister-cruiser steamed into the roadstead of Santa Cruz, the loveliest bay in all the Atlantic isles, and that night the *élite* of the Spanish city came off to our dance on board. I can see the whole thing now—the long white deck, the moonlight on the bay, and the great black Cordillera above it all. There was a throng of olive-skinned beauties on board, and two Spanish warships flashed their search-lights upon the brilliant crowd filling our quarter-deck. Warmth and brightness, music and flowers, and I the— Pali! what of that? In a week we may be frozen stiff in the Alaskan snow. You're going back to your wife and home—lucky man—and I to waste this gold in half the gilded hells between Seattle and Mexico, in pleasure—heavens and earth, in pleasure!'

Allen stirred uneasily, and his partner continued, slowly and deliberately: 'I've about worked out my sentence, for there are things which no man can endure for ever. If anything unexpected happens remember that, and divide the gold between yourself and Jasper. If not, you can set it down as the light-headed nonsense of an over-tired man—there's no liquor in this delectable region.'

Then the adventurer smiled carelessly as ever as he said, 'Good-night!'

Allen still lay awake, and now and then he cast puzzled glances at his companion. Murchison's face seemed strangely drawn and old when the firelight fell upon it, and his jaw was set like flint. 'Another man with a history, and a striking one at that. I always fancied there was something upon his mind,' he said, as at last his eyelids closed.

It was broad daylight when he awakened, and

breakfast was under way. While he rubbed his hands and shivered, the roar of water drew his gaze towards an awful, tossing rapid a hundred yards away, where the whole weight of the river thundered down a slope, among mighty splintered masses fallen from the cliff above. When he took his seat beside the fire Murchison greeted him with his usual careless ease. 'I was talking nonsense when half-asleep last night, partner,' he said. 'Nothing like sunlight for brushing the vapours aside.' Then he commenced one of his imitable stories, and even the stolid Jasper laughed until the tears stood in his eyes.

Breakfast was just over when the Indian sprang to his feet with a hoarse cry, and Allen's heart stood still. He saw the canoe, with all their stores on board save the few that lay upon the rock, slide slowly out of the eddy, the end of the chafed-through mooring line hanging across her bows.

'Sure starvation, and long odds on drowning, unless I can get her in time,' cried Jasper, tearing at his long knee-boots; but Murchison broke in: 'Are you mad—with a family depending on you? This is my time—at last,' he said. Then a dark figure launched out through the air, and clove the green flood with its arms above its head.

'Swims like a pickerel or a log-driver; but he'll never get there in time. God help him!' said Jasper hoarsely, as their comrade shot out across the streaky flow. There was neither foot nor hand hold on either of the smooth-worn walls beyond the shingle, and Allen felt something drumming in his ears as he watched man and canoe drive faster and faster towards the deadly smother below. Just on the fringe of the mad rush, down which the swamped canoe was already whirling, Murchison turned towards them, and for a moment raised an arm out of the water. Allen fancied he waved his hand—he was sure there was no cry for help; then a curling white ridge broke across the swimmer's head and sucked him down. Once, as the two stood with staring eyes and half-open lips, something which might have been a shapeless heap of clothing broke the surface of a frothing eddy, and sank again; and with the cold perspiration beading their foreheads they turned their gaze away.

For a time neither spoke, until Jasper said slowly and huskily, 'The Captain's gone; the river's got him now;' then he gripped Allen's arm as he added, 'I saw his face—just at the last—and I could have sworn the man was glad. Well, partner, there's starvation here, an' we can't be far from the big river now. What's the matter with trying the range?' But Allen made no answer; he was too horror-stricken to speak.

With the gold, which always lay beside them, and but a few days' rations, they turned their backs on the fatal cañon, and clambered up the

transverse gully. For a week they floundered through the snows above, starving on a handful of food each day, until one morning Allen cast himself down upon a frosted shelf of rock, his breath coming thick and fast, and pointed to a mighty flood of pea-green water sliding through the gorge below.

Several days they waited, crouching about a fire among the boulders, feeling the cold hand of death already closing about their throats, and then a little stern-wheel steamer came panting down the river, and they knew that they were saved.

Allen collapsed limply and abjectly as ready hands dragged him out of the steamer's scow, and it was not until he was sweeping south across the Pacific in the last ship of the season that he began to recover his nerve.

There is little more to tell. The young Englishman was fortunate in one or two contracts he took in Vancouver City, and dwells there now in comfort. Never was he able to learn anything concerning the unknown adventurer whose bones lie whitening in the lowest depths of some deep, black pool. He only remembers him as a true and kindly comrade, who had been called to answer for his deeds in a court which is greater than any on earth.

THE HOPE OF LOVE.

THERE is not time enough to love you here—

Only a few quick years to hold you fast.

Days burn away: Love brings the sun so near!

And nights but breathe their blessings, and are past;
And season melts in season. Oh, my dear,

And must we part at last?

Yet, search mine eyes, and tell me if my youth

Laughs but to you as when you called it first.

Nay, but I know it must, for I, in sooth,

Was older' than than now. 'Twas you who nursed
My soul from sickly doubt to faith and truth
When life was at its worst.

And, looking back within your eyes, I find

A smile that overcomes the fear of age:

A brave smile, telling how the joys behind

Were not more sure than those that gild a page
Of life as yet unread—delights designed
For our joint heritage.

And is there something farther distant still—

Somewhere without the world—for you and me,

When we have stepped across the quiet rill

That men would magnify with mystery?

What can we say, O heart, of what may be?

'Love hopeth all things:' let us hope until

God smiles and bids us see.

J. J. BELL.